



The approach of the PREFER project to wildfire prevention and damage assessment in the Mediterranean area

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PREFER is a Copernicus Emergency project funded from the 2012 FP7 Space Work Programme, and it is aimed at developing products and services that will contribute to improve the European capacity to respond to the preparedness, prevention, and recovery management steps in the case of forest fire emergency cycle, with focus on the Mediterranean area. It is well known from the most recent reports on state of Europe's forests that the Mediterranean area is particularly affected by uncontrolled forest fires, with a number of negative consequences on ecosystems, such as desertification and soil erosion, and on the local economy. Most likely, the current risks of forest fires will be exacerbated by climate change. In particular, the climate of Southern Europe and the Mediterranean basin is projected to warm at a rate exceeding the global average. Wild fires will therefore remain the most serious threat to Southern European forests. In this situation, the need to collect better information and more knowledge concerning future risks of forest fires and fire prevention in the Mediterranean area is widely recognized to be a major urgent one. As part of the Copernicus programme (i.e. the European Earth Observation Programme), PREFER is based on advanced geo-information products using in particular the earth observation data acquired and developed in the frame of Copernicus. The objective of the PREFER project, started at the end of 2012, 8 partners (from Italy, Portugal, Spain, France and Greece) involved and three years schedule, is the design, development and demonstration of a pre-operational "end-to-end" information service, fully exploiting satellite sensors data and able to support prevention/ preparedness and recovery phases of the Forest Fires emergency cycle in the EU Mediterranean Region.

The PREFER information is as general as to be usable in the different countries of the Mediterranean Region, and acts in full complement to already existing services, such as the EC JRC EFFIS System. This paper intends to provide a concise report about and major highlights and achievements of the PREFER project research and development phase, along with the first results of the demonstration activities and users' feedbacks.